

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MONROV 05370 060530Z

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5767

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONROVIA 5370

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 1 LINE 6 -- 1976 VICE 1977)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, LI

SUBJECT: RITUAL KILLINGS AND POLITICS IN MARYLAND COUNTY

1. THE GOL RADIO ANNOUNCED AUGUST 3 THE ARREST OF FORMER MARYLAND COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT JAMES ANDERSON; ALLEN YANCY, REPRESENTATIVE FROM MARYLAND COUNTY; AND EIGHT OTHERS IN CONNECTION WITH 14 RITUAL KILLINGS WHICH HAVE OCCURRED IN MARYLAND COUNTY SINCE NOVEMBER 1976, PRESIDENT TOLBERT, ANGERED BY REPORTS REACHING HIM OF THESE KILLINGS, HAD FIRED SUPERINTENDENT ANDERSON JULY 13 BECAUSE OF ANDERSON'S FAILURE TO INFORM HIM OF THESE "MYSTERIOUS OCCURRENCES" AND ORDERED AN IMMEDIATE POLICE-ARMY INVESTIGATION. IN AN ADDRESS JULY 13 BEFORE 43 RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS, THE PRESIDENT CONDEMNED THESE "DEMONIC ACTS", ADDING THAT RITUALISTIC KILLINGS HAD "APPARENTLY BECOME NOTORIOUS IN A CERTAIN POLITICAL SUB-DIVISION OF THE COUNTRY WHERE PEOPLE ARE BEING KILLED AND CERTAIN PARTS OF THEIR BODY TAKEN OFF IN ORDER THAT THE PERPETRATORS MAY GAIN POSITIONS". TOLBERT THEN PROCLAIMED A FIVE-DAY PERIOD OF PRAYER; SUPPLICATION, INTERCESSION AND FASTING DURING WHICH THE PEOPLE SHOULD

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MONROV 05370 060530Z

ASK GOD'S MERCY AND FORGIVENESS FOR THEIR "MANIFOLD ACTS OF TRANSGRESSION". BISHOP BENNIE D. WARNER (WHO WAS NAMED BY TOLBERT AUGUST 3 AS HIS CHOICE TO REPLACE THE DECEASED VICE PRESIDENT WILLIAM E. GREENE, MONROVIA 5334), REPLIED TO THE PRESIDENT ON BEHALF OF THE RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP COMMENDING HIM FOR HIS CONCERN FOR HIS PEOPLE AND MANKIND, ASSURING HIM THAT THE

CHURCH HAS BEEN SPEAKING OUT AGAINST KILLINGS, AND NOTING THAT "NATIONAL SINS INCLUDING CORRUPTION ARE MAINLY CARRIED OUT BY THOSE IN AUTHORITY".

2. REPRESENTATIVE ALLEN YANCY HAS LONG BEEN TAINTED WITH ASSOCIATION WITH RITUAL KILLINGS. IN 1966 HE WAS CONVICTED BY A MARYLAND COUNTY JURY OF THE 1965 "JUJU" MURDER OF GABRIEL DIGGS, AN UNCLE OF THE EDITOR OF THE LIBERIAN STAR. YANCY WAS THEN DEPUTY POLICE COMMISSIONER OF MARYLAND COUNTY. AN APPEAL TO THE SUPREME COURT RESULTED IN A RULING THAT THE TRIAL WAS BIASED, AND YANCY AND HIS ACCOMPLICE, ALFRED MOULTON, WAS RELEASED (A-246, JUNE 16, 1966). IT WAS ASSUMED AT THE TIME THAT YANCY'S POLITICALLY POWERFUL FAMILY AND FRIENDS (INCLUDING SHAD TUBMAN, JR.) HAD BEEN THE MAIN FORCE BEHIND HIS ACQUITTAL. IN 1969 YANCE WAS AGAIN ARRESTED ON SUSPICION OF A RITUAL MURDER, THIS TIME OF CHIEF TAYEE AT GADETARBO, MARYLAND COUNTY. YANCY WAS RELEASED ON BAIL AND THE CASE NEVER REACHED TRIAL.

3. COMMENT: OVER THE YEARS EMBASSY REPORTING OFFICERS HAVE FOUND MARYLAND COUNTY TO BE PERHAPS THE MOST SUPERSTITION-LADEN COUNTY IN LIBERIA. THEY HAVE REPORTED THAT, ACCORDING TO LOCAL BELIEF, YANCY HAS FELT THE NEED TO COMMIT RITUAL MURDERS IN ORDER TO CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MONROV 05370 060530Z

RETAIN HIS "POWER", AND THAT MANY MARYLANDERS FEARED AND DESPISED YANCY. AT THE 1966 TRIAL POPULAR OPINION WAS CLEARLY AGAINST YANCY AND THE MURDER CONVICTION WAS MET BY CHEERS FROM THE COURTROOM SPECTATORS. ON AUGUST 1, WHEN YANCY WAS TAKEN TO HARPER FROM MONROVIA BY NATIONAL POLICE, HE WAS PARADED NEAR NAKED THROUGH THE STREETS OF HARPER, ENCOUNTERING HOSTILE DEMONSTRATIONS FROM THE PEOPLE. MARYLAND SENATOR SHAD TUBMAN COMMENTED TO THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR AUGUST 4 THAT YANCY HAD BARELY ESCAPED THE HANGMAN'S NOOSE IN 1966 AND THAT, IF IN FACT YANCY IS INVOLVED IN THIS KIND OF KILLING, HE OUGHT TO BE TRIED AND EXECUTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. TUBMAN SAID THAT HE WAS MOST DISHEARTENED BY THE FACT THAT POLICE INVESTIGATIONS HAVE NOW UNCOVERED THAT FORMER SUPERINTENDENT ANDERSON, A CLOSE FRIEND AND SCHOOL-MATE, MAY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE MURDERS (ANDERSON IS THE SON OF THE NATIONAL CHAIRMAN OF THE TRUE WHIG PARTY).
HORAN

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